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Gender and Disguise in the Arabic *Cinderella*: A Study in the Cultural Dynamics of Representation

> "It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation."[1]

One of the most compelling cultural facts concerning *Cinderella* in the West is the name itself, which calls up a rich array of associations. In English-speaking countries the tale of *Cinderella* proper, at least in the popular imagination, is an allegory of success, and its heroine is a cultural icon representing a rise from wretchedness to happiness, as reflected in the popular expression, 'a Cinderella story'[2]. Along with a countless number of articles (see Dundes 1982, and the select multi-lingual bibliography, 307–311), the *Cinderella* cycle has received an enormous amount of attention from scholars and collectors alike (e.g., Cox 1893; Rooth 1951; Philip 1989). The Arabic *Cinderella*, on the other hand, has not benefited from such lavish attention, aside from the brief folkloristic analysis in Muhawi/Kanaana (1989, 344sq.)[3], and to some extent this study is meant to rectify that imbalance and hopefully to stimulate further research on the issues raised here.

[1] Benjamin 1977, 27.

[2] Compare in this regard Yolen 1982, 296: "It is part of the American creed, recited subvocally along with the pledge of allegiance in each classroom, that even a poor boy can grow up to become president. The unliberated corollary is that even a poor girl can grow up and become the president's wife. This rags-to-riches formula was immortalized in American children's fiction by the Horatio Alger stories […]. It is little wonder, then, that Cinderella should be a perennial favorite in the American folktale pantheon." Perhaps the preoccupation with Cinderella proper (AaTh 510 A) is more true of the United States than other parts of the Anglophone world, and that may be due to the Disney cartoon version, which has achieved immense popularity since its initial release in 1949. According to Bruford/MacDonald, AaTh 510 B is "much more usual than AT 510 A […] in the older traditions of Britain and Ireland" (1994, 446). Indeed, their own Gaelic version, "The Tale of the Brown Calf" (1994, 64–69) belongs to Type 510 B; so does the one included in Briggs/Tongue, "Mossycoat" (1965, 16–26). The type is missing altogether from the O'Sullivan collection for Ireland.

[3] Whether or not this assertion is strictly true depends on whether we consider the label "Arabic Cinderella" to cover all "Cinderella" stories narrated in Arabic or one of its multiple dialects, including that spoken by Moroccan Jews. In any case the assertion does not hold for the Arabic-speaking segment of the Oriental Jewish community in Israel, where much work has been done in the collection, classification, and analysis of folk narrative. Bar-Itzhak/Shenhar include two such stories with an analysis (1993, 80–92, 143–145), noting the existence of many versions from Arab lands in the Israel Folk Archives (1993, 88).

In a previous study on Arabic folk narrative (Muhawi 2000) I proposed the notion of the canon as a system of transcultural signification which can provide a basis for the translatability of oral tales. The present inquiry will explore further the implications of that research by undertaking a comparative cultural analysis of one canonical story-type found in Arabic and Western traditions. I have chosen to focus on *Cinderella* because its Arabic versions highlight the question of the woman's body – undoubtedly one of the most pressing cultural issues of our time, whether in the West or in the Arab Middle East[4]. This focus will also allow me to take further a reflection, begun in the folkloristic analysis section of Muhawi/Kanaana (1989, 344sq.), on the importance of the disguises used in covering the female body. The idea behind the present inquiry, as I see it, is critical and methodological. At the critical level the analysis will take advantage of the availability of orally performed Arabic tales to explore the cultural dynamics of mimesis, the intersecting areas between the context of culture and the style and content of the representation. And the methodological aim is to show that the Aarne/Thompson typology (1961) can actually function as a system of transcultural signification by putting it to practical use in the comparative analysis of particular folktales. The question of context is somewhat vexed in the case of the Western tales, which are redacted rather than performed versions. This need not be a disadvantage to the discussion, however, because we propose to explore how cultural difference, including culturally motivated difference introduced by editors, affects the process of representation.

Our best avenue of approach to the cultural dynamics (or problematics) of folk narrative representation is by comparison with what literary theory has to say about the relationship of the work of art to the context of culture; and for our purpose it is sufficient to refer to Paul Ricoeur's penetrating analysis in *The Rule of Metaphor*, where he discusses what he calls the 'passage' from "the structure of the work to the world of the work". "This passage", he says, "requires a distinct postulate because of the specific nature of certain works, those called literary." "The production of discourse as 'literature'", he goes on to say, "signifies very precisely that the relationship of sense to reference is *suspended* [original emphasis]. Literature would be that sort of discourse that has no denotation but only connotations" (1977, 220). This seems to me to be a pithy summary of the New Critical perspective on literary discourse, epitomized in the notion of suspension – and it is precisely in that suspension between the work and the world that we seek to locate our cultural problematics. Our understanding of what this 'suspension' means, however, is different from Ricoeur's. When he says that literature has no denotation but only connotations he seems to say that the relationship of meaning to world is severed; the

[4] There is a lively Arab-feminist debate both in the Arab world and Europe and North America. For an excellent discussion and thorough bibliographies, see Malti-Douglas 1991 and 1995.

work exists outside culture in a world of its own. Our inquiry, on the other hand, assumes that 'suspension' means, not the abrogation of the relationship between the work and its world but rather the bringing to an end of preconceptions about what this relationship might be. This way we affirm both the world and the work, and situate meaning in the problematical space between them.

As is well known, *Cinderella* is a convenient label for a vast cycle of stories which divide roughly into two major branches. The Aarne/Thompson type index brings the two together under a single number, AaTh 510 – with *Cinderella* as AaTh 510 A and *Cap O'Rushes* or *The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and of Stars* as AaTh 510 B. In this research I shall propose a reading of *Cinderella* which sees its bifurcation into 'A' and 'B' streams as emerging from the emphasis placed on the woman's body in the structure of the latter. This reading will explore the cultural significance of disguise in terms of identity and representation, and will delve into its role as a narrative figure, or trope, in the rhetoric of the plot. The versions to be compared are German (Grimm, num. 21: *Aschenputtel* and 65: *Allerleirauh*), Palestinian (*Sackcloth*), and Sudanese (*Fatma the Beautiful* and *The Son of Nimēr*), with occasional reference to the Perrault *Cinderella*[5]. The reasons for these choices are quite simple: though there are minor variations among them, all these versions manifest the configurations of disguise necessary for our comparative analysis. In accepting the unity of the type as a 'universal' form of cross-cultural signification, we emphasize the difference that makes up a local version, and are therefore better able to study the dynamics of the relationship of tales to culture.

Since the subject of the study is an oral genre narrated in a local dialect or regional variety rather than written in standard Arabic, our analysis will draw on areas of experience more closely allied to 'folk' practices and beliefs than those belonging to the 'elite' world of literate learning. The oral fact does not detract from the notion of culture as we see it. On the contrary, oral performance is an artistic production which sets into motion a cultural bond between teller and

[5] For Grimm, num. 21: "Aschenputtel" (Ash Maiden) and 65: "Allerleirauh" (All-Kinds-of-Fur) see Uther 1997, t. 1; for an English translation, see Magoun/Krappe 1960; for "Sackcloth" see Muhawi/Kanaana 1989, num. 14; for "Fatma the Beautiful" see Al-Shahi/Moore 1978, num. 20–23; for "Son of Nimēr" see Hurreiz 1977, num. 8; for Perrault's "Cendrillon ou la petite pantoufle de verre" see Dillaye 1880, 155–166; Lang 1901, 64–71. Muhawi/Kanaana (1989, 344) show a distribution for AaTh 510 B that includes other versions from Palestine, as well as Syria and Iraq – which are all close parallels – and the Sudanese versions under discussion. Hurreiz notes that the story is "one of the most popular tales among the Ja'aliyyīn" (1977, 58) in the Sudan. According to Al-Shahi/Moore, who included four versions of AaTh 510 B in their collection (num. 20–23), "Fatma the Beautiful" is "the single most widespread story" among the communities in the Northern Province of Sudan where they made their collection (1978, 21). It is important to note, however, that though they include eight stories with the title of "Fatma the Beautiful", only the four just referred to actually belong to AaTh 510B.

audience through language, style, and world-view. Like all folk narrative art the Palestinian folktale is both normative and projective. It is projective to the extent that it is primarily a woman's art form, allowing narrators to introduce individual and collective social concerns into the tales[6]. And it is normative because the tales are told primarily to children, who are given an imaginative configuration of an idealized social world that is meant to help them discern proper norms of behavior. Therefore, as a direct result of the oral fact, our discussion cannot assume a source-target relation between culture and verbal art such that culture is the 'object' of the representation as 'men in action' are said by Aristotle to be the object of the tragic imitation in Chapter Two of the *Poetics*. Our approach must be nuanced by a problematics that sees culture and work of art, which after all is a part of culture and saturated with it, as interwoven processes and not as reified, separable entities.

Looking first at the type itself in terms of our subject, we cannot fail to note that it is precisely the emphasis on the woman's body that leads to bifurcation into *Cinderella* (AaTh 510 A) and *Cap O'Rushes* (AaTh 510 B). Both subtypes open with the death of a mother who leaves behind an only daughter, but the question of the woman's body enters the picture immediately thereafter with the motif of the lecherous father (Mot. T 411.1 in Thompson's *Motif-Index* [1955–58]), which is missing from *Cinderella* proper (AaTh 510 A). In arousing the desire of the father, the daughter's body in AaTh 510 B is brought to the forefront of the action and highlighted throughout. We recall that after the death of his wife the father of the heroine in the German and Palestinian versions of AaTh 510 B (the brother in the Sudanese versions), finding no one as beautiful as his daughter (or sister), makes ready to marry her. The daughter then obtains a disguise in which she escapes, her body covered completely. Here, in being covered, the body again rises to the forefront, for the disguise becomes a mask that appears to change the identity of the heroine, altering how others, especially men, perceive her body. The mask/disguise covering the heroine's body is not finally removed until the discovery of her true identity and the wedding at the end. Without the mask this discovery would be meaningless: this is why we consider disguise as the controlling narrative trope in the tale. In the Sudanese versions (discussion to follow) this discovery is not a simple or straightforward affair, for on it hangs the delicate balance in the silent battle between the sexes.

The focus on the woman's body comes into even sharper focus in the motif of the lecherous father on which both *Sackcloth* and *Allerleirauh* open. In the German tale, we recall, the wife's dying wish is for her husband to take no one

[6] I am not using the term projective in the psychoanalytical sense proposed by Dundes (1980, 33–61); rather, I have adapted it for application in the cultural sphere. Projection, as I see it, is a form of representation, or mimesis, constituting a basic rhetorical device in the construction of folk narrative. Seeing it this way enables us, where possible, to connect the tale with the teller, discovering in the tale elements that touch directly upon the life of the women who are the principal raconteurs in the Arabic-speaking communities.

who is not as beautiful as she is, and with the same golden hair (Mot. M 255: *Deathbed promise concerning the second wife*). A dying wish in folktales is like a curse; it remains active until the desired outcome is reached. Thus it is the mother who, in setting the condition for her husband's marriage after her death, leads him in the direction of her own daughter. Significantly, the mother's dying wish is missing from all the Arabic tales. Since the father's incestuous desire is aberrative, I read the mother's wish in many Western versions of the tale as a way of shifting blame and guilt away from the father to the mother, that is, from the male to the female. Further, the Arabic versions (as noted) were recorded from oral performance, while the German was redacted by the Grimms. The consequence of this is their attempt to align the tale with the prevailing Christian values concerning sin which, by their very nature, are alien to the pre-Christian world of the folktale. When the king in *Allerleirauh* declares to his councilors his intention to marry his daughter, they are said to be 'aghast' upon hearing his wish and say to him, "God has forbidden a father to marry his daughter. No good can come from sin ['Sünde'], and the realm will be brought to perdition ['das Reich wird mit ins Verderben gezogen']" (Uther 1997, t. 1, 330). Even though the councilors are speaking, their voice is that of an implied narrator whose role is to allegorize the tale by imposing a moralistic interpretation upon the details of the plot.

In the German version it is not only a question of sin but also of an assumed understanding, or cultural subtext, about the meaning of kingship as a mystical union between an anointed figure and his people. As Benjamin puts it, "The sovereign is the representative of history. He holds the course of history in his hand like a sceptre [...]" (1977, 65). The Grimms' view of this tale as an *exemplum* is confirmed again in another projection a little later in the story. When Allerleirauh had been working in the king's kitchen for some time ("For a long time All-Kinds-of-Fur lived there quite wretchedly") the following rhetorical interjection is inserted in the text: "Alas, fair king's daughter, what you still have to go through!" (Magoun/Krappe 1960, 259). True, folktales lend themselves easily to allegorization since they deal with human types rather than with individuals, but folk narrative allegorization is normally part of the interpretation and not part of the tale itself[7]. The intrusion of the moralistic perspective here is a representative example of what we mean by the cultural problematics of representation.

In the Arabic tales, on the other hand, the issue is put more starkly than in *Allerleirauh*: it is not so much a question of immorality, sin, or a political order

[7] Traditional tales have too often been seen as allegories of the critical method used in their analysis, be it anthropological, psychological (Freudian and Jungian), or social. That is always a present danger, and the rhetorical approach I have adopted here is an attempt to get away from allegorization, though the cultural reading of AaTh 510 B in terms of the narrative trope of disguise/discovery may verge on seeing the tale as an allegory of discovery.

based on the divine right of kings, but of something much more concrete – the woman's body and its ownership. To anticipate our argument somewhat, we observe that the tension in the Arabic tales arises from the social assumption that blood relationship gives the male a right of ownership over the woman's body. They clearly make the father (or brother) responsible for his incestuous feelings. True, there is an appeal to religion in *Sackcloth* as well, but religion is seen as something external to the social and moral world of the folktale. The father there, in order to obtain sanction for his incestuous desire, attempts to pervert the institution of religion by resorting to a false comparison. "A tree that I've cared for", he asks the *qadi* (judge in a religious court), "feeding and watering it, is it legally mine, or can someone else claim it?" (Muhawi/Kanaana 1989, 126). Of course, the *qadi*, not knowing what is at stake, gives the father the answer he wants, viz, that the tree belongs to him[8]. In the polygynous Arab/Islamic context where women are the principal narrators there would not be a cultural predisposition for the wife to guide the husband to another woman, who even after her death would remain in the household as a hated co-wife, especially if she is survived by a daughter – which is exactly what happens in *Cinderella* proper.

The moralistic dimension is missing from the Sudanese tales as well, where the responsibility for the taboo desire rests with the male. In both Arabic traditions, the perverse desire of the father/brother is presented iconically as a perversion of language. In *Sackcloth* the father declares his intention to the daughter thus: every time she calls him 'father', he says, "don't call me father; call me cousin". The perversion of language here is another clear example of how culture acts as a subtext within the text. Since at one time it was expected that young women would marry their first cousins, 'cousin' has become a code-word for 'spouse' in Palestinian Arab society. A similar strategy is employed in the Sudanese versions. The father and mother, who had agreed to the marriage of their son to his sister, refuse to help their daughter bring the jar of water down from her head until she says, "My father is my father-in-law", and "My mother is my mother-in-law", or, as in *Son of Nimēr*, "My brother is my husband". As we shall see later, language constitutes a form of action in the tales, and the linguistic sleight of hand here may be seen in a number of ways. A sociolinguistic perspective, for example, would reveal it as a delicate way of dealing with a highly taboo subject, particularly to an audience of children. We recall in this context the revealing response of the Egyptian woman teller who was asked by a friend of Hasan M. El-Shamy's to narrate the story of "the man who wanted to marry his daughter". The teller seems taken aback at the re-

[8] In comparing his daughter to a tree the father uses a metaphor derived from husbandry in which he implicitly compares his wife's body to the earth. Such a comparison introduces a mythological element into the tale, whereby the feminine body is equated with the earth and fertility. Curiously, this equation is also behind the Qur'anic reference to the woman's body as 'tilth' in Sura 2, Verse 223 (Ali translation, 1983).

quest: "No! I wouldn't tell it. … 'Away from you!' [May it be distant from you! – i.e., May you never have to bear such a thing!] Is there a man who would marry his own daughter!? […] it is disruptive to good relations and defamatory!" (El-Shamy 1980, 197). Had the request been framed differently, without overt reference to the sexual content of the tale ('marry' in the Arab context is a euphemism for 'make love to'), it is conceivable that it might have been fulfilled[9].

Though the lecherous father/brother motif exists in all three traditions under comparison, it does not carry a similar cultural meaning in all of them. The lecherous father's/brother's claim of ownership of the daughter's/sister's body in *Sackcloth* and *Fatma the Beautiful* must be placed culturally within the context of the Arab extended family. As we can see from the response of the Egyptian story-teller, the father's desire for the daughter in the tale illustrates the potential which sexuality has for disrupting the Arab social order. Perception of the female body and cultural practices associated with it in the Arab societies based on the extended family are colored almost entirely by the primacy of the patriarchal mode of social organization[10]. Male authority manifests itself in the control of female sexuality by means of a number of cultural practices, the most important being arranged marriage, social segregation along gender lines at puberty, and patrilocal residence for newly married couples. All these social facts form part of the cultural semiotics of the Arabic tales. In a context in which women are the primary narrators of folktales, it is possible to see the motif of the lecherous father as the tale's (or tellers') way of highlighting the conflict, or contradiction, between the needs of the individual and the demands of the social order[11].

Resuming our analysis of the woman's body in relation to the bifurcation of the *Cinderella* type, we come to the motif of the escape in some form of dis-

[9] On a group's sense of itself in relation to deviant behavior, cf. MacDonald 1996, 121: "It seems, however, that tales of the in-group deviant who is weird enough to be labelled an oddity are those first told and most repeated. These tales best serve the purposes of the group as it evaluates itself, sets the bounds of normal society, and points out the weirdest of them all."

[10] On the durability of the extended family in the modern age, cf. Barakat 1993, 103: "The father has traditionally maintained his authority and responsibility because he has owned the family's property and provided the family's livelihood. However, recent changes in family structure have contributed to the democratization of husband-wife and father-children relationships. These changes have occurred in response to the emergence of competing socio-economic units, the employment of women, and the migration of children to the city seeking education and work. In other words, the patriarchal tradition is in a transitional period […]. Yet the family remains patriarchal and hierarchical in structure."

[11] On the issue of this contradiction, compare Al-Shahi/Moore 1978, 51: "If the preference for patrilateral parallel cousin marriage is seen as a means to the economic and marital stability and self-sufficiency of the lineage, then it becomes clear that this type of union stops just short of what would be the perfect means to this end, namely brother/sister incest. Incest, as it were, defines the direction in which [the patrilateral parallel cousin marriage] is pointing, so far as it is aimed at the security of the lineage."

guise (Mot. K 521.1: *Escape by dressing in animal [bird, human] skin*). Thompson's *Motif-Index* does not list disguise as a major category. Where it has been identified, it is classified under 'Deceptions'. Though disguise is a kind of deception, the two do not have the same connotation and are not equivalent. Deception is a moral category involving deceit, while disguise is an esthetic and rhetorical category, a complex narrative trope where culture and tale come together, intersecting and overlapping. The vertical extensions of disguise reach into the narrative itself, eventually unravelling through discovery, while its horizontal extensions connect the semantics of plot with the semiotics of culture. We can distinguish between these in terms of identity and difference: in order for a canonical typology to exist it must be based on a narrative semantics informed by the principle of polysemy in relation to the plot. Polysemy allows a single type number to serve as a Platonic archetype that can accommodate many narrative patterns, while the corresponding semiotics of culture accounts for differences among versions of the same type which are attributable to variations in cultural practice and local ecology. In considering culture as a semiotic system we view it as signifying whole – that which is presupposed in order for the tale to have meaning.

The cultural semiotics of the escape motif (Mot. K 521.1) consists of two parts, the disguise and the escape, each of which has its own set of meanings within the context of the tale. We shall first look at the escape, then proceed to the analysis of disguise and its implications. In escaping social conventions that allow the daughter to fall victim to the desire of the father, the daughter must assume a disguise associating her with something that places her completely outside the reach of these conventions. Hence, the very strangeness of the disguise is an important element in its cultural semiotics. In *Allerleirauh* the daughter puts her father off by asking for a cloak made of fur from all the animals of the forest, and for three dresses, one as golden as the sun, another as silvery as the moon, and the third as glittering as the stars. Both of these types of garments function as forms of disguise in different parts of the tale. When the garments are provided, the girl escapes from home, disguised in the cloak made from all kinds of fur. The strangeness of this disguise is emphasized in the tale when the king whose servants find her in the woods wants to know "what kind of game has hidden itself" in the tree at which his dogs were barking. The servants report it to be a strange animal ('ein wunderliches Tier'), the like of which had never been seen before.

Similarly, the sackcloth which Sackcloth wears covers her from head to toe, and is open only at the mouth, nostrils and eyes. It makes her appear more like a male freak of nature than a young woman. Her strange disguise, which now involves an apparent shift in gender, so effectively changes her appearance that even her father does not recognize her. After wandering for a long time, Sackcloth eventually finds her way to the gates of a palace, where the servants see her and tell their mistress they have seen a very strange sight, a freak of nature. Here also the strangeness of the disguise admits her into the prince's house-

hold as a servant in the kitchen. There is a strange disguise in the Sudanese versions as well (Mot. K 521.1: *Escape by dressing in human skin*), but it forms part of section III of the plot analysis: *Meeting the Prince* – which I shall discuss later – and not part of the escape. Given the importance of the fact that an unmarried girl should not go wandering about on her own in the Arab cultural context, the escape in the Sudanese tales is made more socially acceptable to the audience by the fact that Fatma does not leave home alone but with a group of other girls, having convinced them that they too might end up as wives to their brothers. After an adventure with an ogress (on which more, below), she tricks an old man into teaching her how to peel off a person's skin, and then proceeds to peel off his skin and wear it as a disguise to cover her femininity.

A number of issues here, all centering on the heroine's escape and disguise, are important to our discussion, some with regard to the type in general, and some with regard to the individual versions. As for the former we must reconsider the name of part I of the plot analysis, *Persecuted Heroine,* for additional reflection on the typology. First there is the question of the lecherous father, and that certainly makes of the daughter a persecuted heroine. However, the desire of the father to have sexual possession of his daughter is a different order of persecution from the kind of repression to which Cinderella is subjected, and this I think helps to explain the strangeness of the disguise that each heroine of AaTh 510 B wears. Thompson also observes that the heroine in these subtypes assumes "a peculiar disguise" (1977, 128). Secondly, and here we are still with the type, there is the contrast between the active heroines of AaTh 510 B and the passive Cinderella of AaTh 510 A. In each case of AaTh 510 B, the heroine must take her destiny in her own hands by escaping – that is, by moving out of the space of her father into that of the prospective husband. If we compare Cinderella with Fatma, who first saves herself from the clutches of an ogress and then tricks an old man by obtaining from him the secret of removing a person's skin so that she can put it on as disguise, we can see a clear contrast between her dynamism and the passivity of the heroine in AaTh 510 A. In other words, the heroines in AaTh 510 B do not allow themselves to be persecuted.

Now moving on to the level of the individual tale, we note that Allerleirauh's disguise associates her with the animal world, while Sackcloth and Fatma assume disguises that make them appear as members of the opposite sex. In undertaking the change of space, each of the heroines takes refuge in, or by, a tree. In the world of the folktale, wood has magical properties that can protect against evil. Even in real life, many people resort to touching wood in order to avert the bad influence of an invisible evil eye that might envy one's good fortune. In one of the Sudanese versions (Al-Shahi/Moore 1978, 21), the disguise itself is made of wood. Further the geographic context of *Fatma the Beautiful* sheds light on the significance of this wood in AaTh 510 B. Al-Shahi and Moore collected their tales in a region of the Northern Province of Sudan whose geography is determined by the Nile River, with a small strip of culti-

vated land on one side, followed by a semi-arid area, beyond which is the Libyan desert. As they point out, the first stage of Fatma's escape is "to that boundary area [...] to the woods and scrubs of the semi-desert" (1978, 23). This region, not highlighted in *Sackcloth*, resembles the woods in *Allerleirauh*, and represents a transitional area where the heroine and her companions are in their own feminine space, somewhere between the patriarchal spaces of the father and the husband. In this "marginal and ambiguous area" (Al-Shahi/Moore 1978, 27) Fatma has her adventure with a malignant ogress, or ghouleh, who in Arabic folklore equals unbridled appetite and represents a region somewhere between chaos and civilization. The ogress, for example, tries to devour Fatma and her friends, but Fatma is clever enough to demand impossible tasks from her, such as bringing water in a net. It is in this boundary region, as well, that Fatma achieves a rapid transition in her development from girlhood and inexperience to womanhood and experience, for in resorting to the thorns of the acacia tree to deprive the old man of his skin to use as a disguise for herself, she not only appears to change her gender (like Sackcloth) but also seems to take on the knowledge and wisdom of the old man. There is a difference between Sackcloth and Fatma in respect to the change of gender, however. As we shall see shortly, the assumption of the masculine disguise in Fatma's case highlights the silent battle between the sexes alluded to earlier by endowing her with a physical strength that is not available to Sackcloth.

Beyond this it is difficult to take the comparison, for the simple reason that the understanding of what constitutes the woman's space is different between Arab and European cultures. The almost absolute control of the woman's space in traditional Arab society is one of the most significant cultural practices for understanding the cultural semiotics of Sackcloth's escape, and to a lesser extent, Fatma's. It is difficult to make generalizations about culture in any case, for cultural practices vary from one locality to another even within the same region, but our primary interest in this study is not in culture as such but in the cultural dynamics of representation. To the extent that all three heroines, including the European one, move out of the patriarchal space of the father into the space of the potential husband, the motif of escape serves a similar function, as it leads to marriage in all of them. But if, as in the Sudanese and Palestinian versions, space is socially segregated along gender lines, then it is no longer a geographical category but a social one charged with its own set of cultural semiotics. In a society that adheres closely to social organization around the patriarchal extended family there is a cultural constraint on the woman's space as a result of the relentless male control of this space through endogamy. Cousin-marriage, the preferred (though not necessarily the most prevalent) form of marital relation in traditional Palestinian and Arab society, combined with patrilocal patterns of residence, ensure that as much as possible the woman, either as daughter or as wife, remains in the emotional and physical space controlled by the elder males in the family. Therefore the movement of Sackcloth and Fatma out of the father's space represents a truly radical break

with cultural norms. Within such a social context, the escape of the heroines is a most unusual and daring act, and they are that much more heroic for striking out on their own. For Sackcloth the escape is possible only with the disguise. Without it her honor would be compromised. The tale can make a heroine out of her, and though as a wonder tale it can create all kinds of implausible events, it still cannot give her any greater sexual freedom than this without transforming her into a bird or some other kind of non-human creature. That is, the tale cannot openly transgress the cultural absolutes regarding women's honor. As noted, Fatma does not need the disguise to leave the space of her family, but, as we shall see presently, she does need it in order to negotiate the sexually charged encounter with her future husband.

It was observed earlier that Mot. K 521.1 consists of two parts, each with its own set of cultural assumptions. Having dealt with the modalities of the heroines' escape (first part of Mot. K 521.1) and their cultural extensions, we will now look at the cultural semiotics at work in the second part of the motif – the disguise itself. The disguises of Fatma and Sackcloth have in common the apparent gender transformation of the heroine, a transformation which I believe is connected with the prevalent belief in, and practices touching on, the evil eye. Belief in the evil eye was so prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia that it is referred to several times in the Qur'an, becoming the subject of intense debate among the learned after the establishment of Islam[12]. Though the evil eye, as Dundes so aptly demonstrates (1980, 93–133), is a complex of beliefs and practices rather than a single thing, in the Arab world it is understood in terms of envy. One sees evidence of this belief in the ubiquitous presence of apotropaic devices in the Arab cultural milieu. In the countries of the Maghreb (Arab North Africa), these take the form of the so-called palm of Fatma – an open hand with the fingers held together – with or without an eye in the middle. The hand of Fatma is the Arabic equivalent of the pentangle in Europe; and it is believed that the number five offers protection from the evil eye. In Egypt and the Arab countries of the Levant, blue beads are dangled from a string somewhere on a desirable object. Desirable material possessions are subject to the influence of the evil eye. It is not uncommon to see blue beads dangling from

[12] As Al-Asmar shows (1991, 37–44), there is no direct reference to the evil eye as such in the Qur'an. The five occurrences of the word envy (ḥasad) and its derivatives (Sura 2, 109; 48, 15; 4, 54; and twice in 113, 5) are understood by the Qur'anic exegetes (mufassirūn) to be references to the evil eye. The eye, however, is referred to directly in the ḥadīth, as set down in several canonical collections, especially Saḥīḥ Muslim, where the Prophet is said to have cautioned his wife Aisha to use a charm (ruqya) against the evil eye. For two stories touching on the subject and a brief discussion of evil eye belief, see also El-Shamy 1980, 182sq. and 286sq.; see as well Richard M. Dorson's introduction (XXIX–XXXI). The most famous 'orientalist' account of the evil eye is of course that of Lane 1836, 251–258 and passim, especially 57, where there is a drawing of an Egyptian woman wearing the millāyeh, a garment that is understood to be a form of the veil (ḥijāb) and that bears a great resemblance to the description of the sackcloth in the tale of "Sackcloth".

the necks of horses, donkeys, or mules, or the mirror of a car. It is also very common to see a formula against the evil eye (ʻAyn al-ḥasūd lā tasūd [The eye of the envious will not prevail]) written out on the bumper of a car or framed and placed on the walls of a the sitting-room in a house. With regard to children, especially if they are strikingly handsome or pretty, when not protected with an amulet they are made to look somehow ugly, either by means of dress or the manner in which the hair is cut. Boys are sometimes dressed as girls, and vice versa. From the fact that the body of the young girl, which arouses the desire of the father, is so completely covered as to leave no place for the desiring eye to land, we may conclude, first that there is a cultural subtext involving the evil eye here (just as there was a subtext involving the meaning of kingship in Grimm); and secondly that the daughter in *Sackcloth* is still a child, since adults are not as susceptible to the influence of the evil eye as children are. Another indication is the transformation in her appearance into a freakish monster of the opposite sex, which would make her repulsive to a roving male eye full of desire. Furthermore, the case of Fatma highlights the sexual implications of the disguise, for as we have just noted she does not need it to escape from her family but only in the encounter with her future husband.

That which started out as a mere disguise is now becoming conflated with the social practice of veiling. Of course, the question of the veil is one of the most pressing issues in the contemporary debate among Arab and Western scholars, feminist or otherwise, on the role of women in so-called 'Islamic' societies. Halim Barakat notes that despite the progress made by Arab women in many fields of life, "the veil is still omnipresent in several Arab countries and is widespread in others" (1993, 105). We cannot enter into the debate on the veil here without leaving our topic altogether. We are satisfied to point out, however, that the Arabic word usually translated as 'veil' – ḥijāb – also means 'screen', 'partition', and 'barrier'; in other words, something that separates what is behind it from the outside world. (There is also a mystical meaning of the word by which reality lies hidden from sight by a veil of illusion or ego-consciousness.) Thus the eye of the father, whose automatic assumption of absolute ownership of the daughter's body translates into sexual possession, is seen by the daughter as a generalized male evil eye. With the exception of Dundes (1980, 94), no scholar, as far as I know, has considered this question from the folkloristic perspective we are developing here – a perspective that sees a connection between the social practice of veiling, the prevalent belief in the evil eye, and the sexuality of the father, who in the tale becomes an almost absolute male Other against whom the daughter must protect herself at all costs.

As we have seen, the literal disguise in AaTh 510 B is the central fact in the rhetoric of the plot on which hangs the bifurcation of the type into a branch with passive heroines and another with active ones who assume responsibility for their destiny. Disguise, as we said, allows Allerleirauh and Sackcloth to escape from the house of the father, and it is needed for the encounter with the

prospective husband at the end. There is a disguise in *Cinderella* as well, but it is metaphorical, in the sense that the heroine's physical beauty is hidden under a cover of ashes and grime while she retains a human identification with the lowest of social classes. The disguises of all three heroines, it is important to note, turn them into strangers to their own families, though that of Cinderella is not consciously assumed like the other two. To the extent that her identity belongs not to her but to her family, the Arabic heroine in effect also becomes a stranger to herself, and the disguise is the tale's way of letting her discover an identity separate from that of her family. At least, she finds her own mate rather then have her marriage arranged by the family. Within the conservative social context we have been exploring, the cultural dynamics of these events show them to be subversive, though offered only in the domain of imagined possibility. Folktales are not as innocent as they seem.

Clearly, the cultural semiotics of the disguise in the *Cinderella* cycle is quite complex. At the most general level, the type of disguise worn by each heroine enabled us to draw an important distinction, based on the context of culture, between the disguise worn by Allerleirauh, which associates her with animals and the world of nature, and that used by Sackcloth, which assumes the role of a social mask and therefore belongs more to the world of culture than to the world of nature. The association with the earth and the animal world in *Allerleirauh* may be seen as the tale's way of representing the desire of the father, whose sexuality belongs in the instinctive world of animals. The transition to the sexuality of the future husband could not be more pronounced, as we can see from the glittering dresses the heroine wears at the end – dresses that associate her with the stars and the heavens. Similarly in the Arabic versions the freakish male disguise emphasizes the unnatural desire of the father/brother, protecting the girl from their hostile advances and warding off possessive male glances. Though veiling as such is an urban phenomenon and was never practiced by the settled agriculturalists living in Palestinian villages, we may nevertheless venture to see Sackcloth's disguise (if we take our projective hypothesis seriously enough) as the women teller's critical perspective on the veil, which denies the female her body, turning her into an asexual being at best, or an ugly and undesirable male at worst.

Fatma's disguise, however, which consists literally of the skin of an old man, puts us on firmer ground with respect to the cultural semiotics of part III of the plot analysis: *Meeting the Prince* and in terms of the polarization of social relationships in the Arab world along gender lines – a polarization that confers a different significance upon the ending of the Arabic versions of the tale. Our focus being on disguise, or the covering of the woman's body, we will consider part III, where the heroine is still in disguise, together with part IV: *Proof of Identity* in which there is an uncovering with the removal of the disguise. Not only is the disguise itself culturally significant but its manner of removal is equally significant, if not more so. *Sackcloth* is the pivotal tale here because it has common elements with *Allerleirauh* on one side, where the heroine entices

the prince with her glittering dresses, and with *Fatma the Beautiful* on the other, which represents the most extreme case of polarization along gender lines and where the meeting turns into a contest of wills and strength.

But first, let us recall some details. After Allerleirauh is brought to the king's palace where she serves in the kitchen, the rest of the story follows the pattern of *Cinderella* proper, except that there is no fairy godmother and no magic journey (part II of the plot analysis: *Magic Help*). When there is a party the young woman convinces the cook to let her go up and have a look. This happens three times, and each time the maiden captivates the king by dancing with him in one of her fancy dresses, rushing back afterwards to hide in her cubby hole. Eventually, however (when the king sees the ring he had slipped on her finger the night before), she is discovered. And with the discovery comes the male supremacy over the female, for the king rips off her cloak, and declares her to be his 'dear bride'. What we have here is an authoritative assumption of ownership of the woman on the part of the male, an assumption sanctioned by the culture in the institution of marriage, and implicit in her being a good cook who can please him gastronomically, and an alluring woman who can tease him sexually in the game of hide-and-seek she plays with him. She is waiting to be caught and uses her cooking ability and the glittering dresses as lures. We note here, that in meeting the prince, Allerleirauh has the upper hand initially, since she knows who the prince is while he does not know who she is. But the moment she is discovered, the social roles are reversed, with the Prince automatically assuming mastery.

The situation in *Sackcloth* is similar to and at the same time different from *Allerleirauh*, opening out yet another horizon on the cultural problematics of representation. After Sackcloth has been at the house of the prince for some time, there is a wedding in the neighborhood – and in the Palestinian context a wedding celebration is the most important social event in the life of the community. Sackcloth pretends to stay behind, but after everyone leaves she goes to the celebration and takes part in the dancing of the women, wearing the wedding dress (thōb) her father had brought her. She then rushes out without anyone knowing where she went. While dancing, she is noticed by her own mistress, the mother of the prince at whose house she is staying. Upon hearing about the beautiful young woman everyone had admired, the prince wants to meet her. But how, given that the sexes are to a significant extent socially segregated? In a most unusual step for an Arab man, he proposes to his mother that he be dressed as a woman so that he can go into the woman's section to observe Sackcloth dancing. She manages to elude him the first night, but on the second he follows her to his own house. The next day he tells Sackcloth to bring his dinner because he wants to share it with her. Here we note the association of food with love that we saw in *Allerleirauh*, and which we also find in the Perrault *Cinderella*. On the third try she manages to reach the top of the stairs with the platter, and when the food has been set before him, the prince pulls out a knife and reaches for the sackcloth coat. "You must take this thing

off," he says. He makes her take off her sackcloth, and sends for the qadi to draw up a marriage contract. Here the situation is similar to the ending of *Allerleirauh*, with the prince pulling out his symbolic knife and making her take off her sackcloth so that he can lay claim to her body legally. However, it is also the reverse of that in *Allerleirauh*, with the male having the upper hand from the start, since even though he still does not know who she is, he sees her dancing with the women, while she has no knowledge of his presence there at all. Yet this position of supremacy is modified by the fact of his being in feminine disguise himself. When they do meet they are on equal terms, for they are both dressed as women. The prince's assumed superior status which is conferred by his gender is mitigated by the fact of his willingness to feminize himself symbolically in a culture that puts a high premium on maleness. This double male/female disguise alerts us to the Arab cultural assumption of a perhaps unresolvable tension in gender relations, particularly where marriage may be involved. The segregation along gender lines which is practiced in the majority of families in Palestinian villages, though not absolute, still reinforces the idea of the separateness of the sexes, pointing to difference not only in culture but also in nature.

We have already seen how disguise functions as a form of power in the hands of both Sackcloth and Allerleirauh, but the Sudanese versions combine all the closing elements of the plot, showing that 'meeting the prince' may be an encounter in which the female has the upper hand and surrenders to the male only on her own terms. We recall that after the encounter with the ghouleh the girls (as in *Allerleirauh*) hide in the trunk of a tree, Fatma having already obtained the skin of the old man and put it on. A caravan passes by with the son of Nimēr at its head, and each of the men takes one of the girls with him and marries her. The son of Nimēr ends up with Fatma in her old-man disguise. Eventually he discovers her identity when he sees her swimming in the river. Now the proof of identity has to be established, but the male here has more to do than simply take hold of the woman, remove her disguise and claim her as his own. In the Sudanese tales the reverse situation from *Sackcloth* obtains; instead of the male assuming a feminine disguise, it is the woman who assumes masculine disguise. In the Sudanese tales the meeting with the prince turns into a contest of wits (a game of mangala in *Son of Nimēr*) or physical strength (wrestling in *Fatma the Beautiful*), the winner having the right to undress the loser. Fatma wins three times, and each time the man asks to be let off, but on the third try he wins and refuses to let her off. Only then does he earn the right to remove her disguise and marry her. Al-Shahi and Moore (1978, 1) point out that the name of the heroine is often pronounced Fatna (one who is wide awake, clever) in the Sudanese communities where the tale was collected, rather than Fatma or Fatima (the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, and a very common Arabic name). The contest between the male and the female in this tale points to a cultural semiotics of polarization amounting to an ongoing battle between the sexes, which the male does not win. The woman has to be

taken on her own terms, and the tale leaves us guessing as to whether she actually lost or only allowed her partner to win. In view of prevailing stereotypical views about the inferior place of women in Arab society, it is important to note how in the Arabic tales the heroine forces her potential mate into meeting her on equal gender grounds.

Disguise, as we have seen, is tied to the question of gender and identity at least in the AaTh 510 B branch of the type, for it begins with a covering up of the woman's body in a garment that makes of her a strange creature and ends with an uncovering that leads to discovery. If the opening elements establish the pole of disguise, the closing elements – *Meeting the Prince*, *Proof of Identity*, and *Marriage with the Prince* – belong to the pole of discovery in the semantics of the plot. The proof of identity involves a reversal for the young woman from a position of power achieved through anonymity to a reversion to the social norms of patriarchy. The Arab heroine's cloak of sackcloth/old man's skin is also a social mask which in the narrative economy of the tale forms a pattern that embodies a radical phenomenology of gender. In showing the extent to which identity may be culturally constructed and dependent on appearances and social convention, these tales would have us consider the possibility that identity and gender are both social masks that engage perception at the symbolic level despite prevailing folk beliefs concerning differences in nature between male and female. In all three tales there is actually a process of double masking; the beautiful dresses the heroines wear at the end are just as much of a social mask as the fur or sackcloth cloaks, the old man's skin, or the layer of ash and grime in *Cinderella* proper. In one they appear supremely feminine and desirable; in the other they are animal-like, freakish and masculine, or lowly and unworthy of attention. The first disguise gives Sackcloth anonymity, obscuring both gender and identity and enabling her to move around in a culture in which women are not supposed to go out alone. It also serves her (and Allerleirauh) well because it highlights the contrast with the wedding dress that makes her look more attractive at the end, engaging male fantasy about possession and uncovering the woman's body. This detail is brought out more prominently in *Allerleirauh*, where the first disguise allying her with the animals and nature gives way to the glittering dresses that associate her with heaven and the stars, endowing her with a transcendent and irresistible beauty. The degree of desirability of the one disguise arises directly from the degree of undesirability of the other. In putting the emphasis on the woman's body, these tales sexualize social relationships for the heroines, who negotiate the movement from the sexuality of the father/brother to that of the husband through manipulation of public assumptions about their identity, or gender, or both.

Finally, we have explored the vertical extension of disguise into the plot as a narrative trope whose function is to lead to discovery. We have also delved into its horizontal extensions, showing its relationship to identity and gender and tentatively proposing the notion that appearances and convention make of

gender a kind of disguise. It is now time to explore how in oral narrative disguise itself can replace identity. In the folktale, content and form are united in style and language as perhaps in no other genre of literary art. We have already broached this subject in our discussion of performance as both an esthetic and a cultural fact. This unity is due in large measure to what Max Lüthi has called the abstract style of the folktale, which is characterized by one-dimensionality and depthlessness: "Not only does the folktale lack a sense of any gap separating the everyday world from the world of the supernatural. In its essence and in every sense, it lacks the dimension of depth. Its characters are figures without substance, without inner life, without an environment; they lack any relation to past and future, to time altogether" (1982, 11). The fact that disguise is taken to be 'real' is clearly due to the one-dimensionality and depthlessness of folktale style. Disguise is a major narrative trope in the folktale precisely because of that one-dimensionality. It enables the fake and the real to exist side by side and have equal validity. As Lüthi makes clear, in abstract style everything exists in sharp outline on the surface; everything is taken at face value. What appears is what is. If a thing appears to be male, it is male; if it appears female then it is female. This is perhaps why in many folktales the hero/ine does not recognize the 'real' except with the help of a sign or a token, as was the case with the king's recognition of the ring at the end of *Allerleirauh*. Signs are more objective than identities, and therefore much easier to recognize.

To create its depthless universe the folktale relies heavily on sharp outlines and objects that have crystal clarity, such as mountains (and indeed, slippers) made of glass. We can extend Lüthi's thought here further by observing to what extent the language of the folktale is itself transparent like the crystalline objects which abound in it. We alluded earlier to the possibility of considering the distortion of language evident in the father's question to the qadi as an iconic form of representation of his perverse desire for his daughter. To me, the legalism to which he resorts in order to obtain what he wants is one such crystal moment where, by means of a false analogy, the process of abstract thought is deployed in the service of male desire. It reflects the power the folktale invests in the speech acts of language (as for example in the use of curses or invocations hinted at earlier), or perhaps we should say, language itself as speech act – an idea which I mention only in passing as it constitutes a subject for research in its own right. An outstanding example of this in *Sackcloth* occurs in the tale's manner of establishing a masculine identity for the heroine. Once she dons her sackcloth, this transformation is effected through the latent power of language in creating character and action through narrative. Arabic as we know is characterized by the use of grammatical gender: in *Sackcloth* the teller deploys this characteristic of language iconically, relying on the deictic power of nouns and pronouns to create reference and a masculine gender for the heroine. Till the unravelling at the end, the teller refers to Sackcloth only by means of masculine pronouns, or by the appellation 'Abu l-Lababīd' (Sackcloth Man). In Lüthi's words: "The folktale transforms the world; it puts a

spell on its elements and gives them a different form, and thus it creates a world with a distinct character of its own" (1982, 24). This transformation is sufficiently regular to provide us with a semantics of plots that function as cross-cultural 'types', and these in turn are meaningful only to the extent they are embedded in local settings where the semiotics of culture can give individual shape to the narrative. As we have attempted to show here, the transformation of the world mentioned by Lüthi is not haphazard, but originates in the cultural problematics (or dynamics) of folk narrative representation.

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Abstract

This paper offers a comparative analysis of Arabic and European versions of *Cinderella* (AaTh 510 A and 510 B) with a view to exploring the dynamics of representation in relation to cultural context but with particular emphasis on the Arabic tradition. My reading sees the tale as an embodiment of gender relations in both cultures, with the accent placed on control of female sexuality – or the assumption of ownership of the woman's body – first on the part of the father, whose incestuous desire for the daughter is the motif that bifurcates the tale into the two subtypes, and on the part of the suitor at the end of the tale. The study explores the cultural significance of disguise in terms of identity and representation, and delves into its role as a narrative figure, or trope, in the rhetoric of the plot. With reference to the Arab context, the need for the mask/disguise (which the discussion conflates with the modern practice of veiling) is interpreted as a form of protection against the father's incestuous desire at the beginning of the tale and from the (evil) eye of the male gaze upon the woman's body after she flees her father's house. While in the Western versions of the tale the male simply claims ownership of the woman's body after the discovery of her identity at the end – a claim given legal sanction in the institution of marriage – in the Arab cultural context, where folk narrative is a woman's art form, the heroine is not so easily won. She proves to be the male's equal in every respect, including physical strength.

The analysis is nuanced by a problematics that sees culture and work of art as interwoven processes and not as reified, separable entities. The entire discussion is conducted with reference to the Aarne/Thompson types, the assumption being that, for a canonical typology to exist, it must be based on a narrative semantics informed by the principle of polysemy in relation to the plot. Polysemy allows a single type number to serve as a Platonic archetype that can accommodate many narrative patterns, while the corresponding semiotics of culture accounts for differences among versions of the same type which are attributable to variations in cultural practice and local ecology. In the final analysis, representation is seen as an expressive link that arches over the rupture between the semantics of plot and the semiotics of culture.

Résumé

Le présent article se propose de comparer les versions arabes et européennes de *Cendrillon* (AaTh 510 A et AaTh 510 B) afin d'étudier la dynamique de la représentation d'un point de vue culturel, en insistant tout particulièrement sur la tradition arabe. J'envisage ce conte comme expression des problèmes relationnels qui existent entre hommes et femmes dans ces deux cultures. Je cherche tout spécialement à savoir à qui revient le contrôle de la sexualité féminine. Ici, c'est au départ le père, dont le désir incestueux envers sa fille constitue le motif amenant le classement du conte en deux sous-types, et à la fin du conte, c'est le futur mari. Cette étude explore la signification culturelle du déguisement d'un point de vue identitaire et représentationnel et examine en profondeur son rôle en tant que figure stylistique ou trope dans la rhétorique du récit. Dans un contexte arabe, le besoin de masque/déguisement (mis en rapport avec la pratique moderne du port du voile) peut être interprété comme une forme de protection contre le désir incestueux du père et le (mauvais) œil que le regard masculin jette sur le corps de la femme après sa fuite de la maison paternelle. Dans les versions occidentales du conte, l'homme prend simplement possession du corps de la femme après avoir découvert son identité – revendication entérinée par l'institution du mariage – tandis que, dans le contexte culturel arabe dans lequel le conte populaire est typiquement une forme d'art réservée aux femmes, l'héroïne n'est pas si facilement conquise. Elle s'avère à tout égard l'égale de l'homme, même au niveau de la force physique.

J'ai nuancé cette analyse par la problématique qui considère que la culture et la création artistique sont des processus intimement liés, et non des entités distinctes, réifiées. La typologie Aarne/Thompson sous-tend mon propos, puisque d'après moi, pour qu'une typologie canonique existe, elle doit se fonder sur une sémantique narrative qui soit en accord avec le principe de la polysémie du récit. Cette polysémie permet d'utiliser un seul type comme un archétype platonicien adaptable à de nombreux schémas narratifs, alors que la sémiotique culturelle correspondante explique les différences existant entre les versions d'un même type, variations imputables aux pratiques culturelles et à l'environnement local. Cette analyse permet en définitive d'appréhender la représentation comme un lien expressif formant un lien entre la sémantique du récit et la sémiotique culturelle.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende vergleichende Analyse einiger arabischer und europäischer Versionen des Aschenputtelmärchens (AaTh 510 A und 510 B) versucht, die Dynamik der Darstellung in bezug auf den kulturellen Kontext zu erklären, mit Schwerpunkt auf der arabischen Überlieferung. Nach meiner Deutung ist das Märchen ein Ausdruck der Geschlechterbeziehungen in beiden Kulturen, mit Betonung der Kontrolle der weiblichen Sexualität oder der Anmaßung des Anrechts auf den weiblichen Körper, zunächst durch den Vater, dessen Inzestwunsch das Motiv bildet, auf Grund dessen der Erzähltyp sich in zwei Untertypen aufspaltet, und zum Schluß durch den künftigen Ehemann. Der Aufsatz untersucht die kulturelle Bedeutung des Verkleidungsmotivs im Zusammenhang von Identität und Darstellung sowie seine Rolle als erzählerische Figur oder Tropus in der Rhetorik der Erzählung. Im arabischen Kontext wird die Notwendigkeit einer Maske oder Verkleidung – die in Zusammenhang mit der modernen Verschleierungspraxis diskutiert wird – als eine Form des Schutzes vor dem väterlichen Inzestwunsch und vor dem (bösen) männlichen Blick auf den Körper der Frau nach ihrer Flucht aus dem Haus ihres Vaters gedeutet. Während der Mann in den europäischen Versionen nach der Entdeckung der Identität der Frau einfach Anspruch auf den Besitz ihres Körpers erhebt – ein An-

spruch, der durch die Institution der Ehe sanktioniert wird – kann die Heldin im arabischen kulturellen Kontext, in dem das Märchen eine weibliche Kunstform ist, nicht so leicht gewonnen werden. Sie zeigt sich dem Mann in jeder Hinsicht ebenbürtig, sogar hinsichtlich körperlicher Stärke.

Nuanciert wird die Analyse durch ein Verständnis von Kultur und Kunst als miteinander verflochtener Prozesse, nicht als getrennter Phänomene. Die Diskussion wird durchgängig mit Bezug auf den Typenindex von Aarne/Thompson geführt, da eine kanonische Typologie nur existieren kann, wenn sie auf einer erzählerischen Semantik basiert, die vom Prinzip der Polysemie der Handlung durchdrungen ist. Die Polysemie ermöglicht es, daß eine einzige Typennummer als platonischer Archetyp dienen kann, der vielen erzählerischen Mustern Aufnahme bietet, während die entsprechende kulturelle Semiotik Verschiedenheiten zwischen Versionen desselben Typs durch Unterschiede in der kulturellen Praxis und den lokalen Gegebenheiten erklärt. Insgesamt wird die Darstellung als ausdrückliches Bindeglied gesehen, das den Bruch zwischen der Semantik der Handlung und der Semiotik der Kultur überbrückt.